



The Florida House of Representatives

Office of the Speaker

Marco Rubio
Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RUBIO NAMES 13-MEMBER SELECT COMMITTEE ON AUTISM

TALLAHASSEE—House Speaker Marco Rubio today announced the appointment of 13-members to a newly created House Select Committee on Autism and Developmental Disorders. Rubio named State Rep. Andy Gardiner, R-Orlando, to chair the committee. Rubio said the Committee should submit its initial recommendations within one week of its April 8th first meeting.

A copy of Rubio's appointment letter is pasted below. Other members of the House who were named by Rubio to the Select Committee are: Reps. Bill Galvano, vice chair, Loranne Ausley, Ari Porth, Jimmy Patronis, Will Weatherford, Dennis Ross, Audrey Gibson, Joseph Gibbons, Anitere Flores, Juan Zapata, Marti Coley, Stephen Precourt.

April 4, 2008

The Honorable Andy Gardiner
Florida House of Representatives
303 House Office Building
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

Dear Representative Gardiner:

This session, despite an array of legislative priorities that require our time and attention, the issues of treatments for autism and other developmental disabilities have surged to the forefront as a legislative priority. After consultation with Healthcare Council Chair Rep. Aaron Bean, it is apparent that any solution requires a multi-disciplinary approach that incorporates expertise from the healthcare, education

and insurance fields. Accordingly, I am creating a Select Committee on Autism and Developmental Disorders to look at these issues.

Pursuant to Rule 7.6, you are hereby appointed to serve as a member of the Select Committee on Autism and Developmental Disorders. At the recommendation of Health Care Council Chair Aaron Bean, I am also naming you to chair this select committee.

The purview of the committee will be to consider ways to best utilize public and private resources to assist families in Florida with children coping with autism spectrum disorders or other developmental disabilities. Early detection and treatment are critical to the well-being of these young people. Not only will children with these developmental disorders benefit from these services, but all of Florida will benefit from their successful education and integration into society.

While mandatory insurance coverage has been suggested as one solution, it is important to note that more than 50 percent of the health insurance sold in Florida is not subject to state mandates. A costly mandate could jeopardize the ability of many to maintain their insurance. Policies that are subject to such mandates cover fewer than three million citizens. Many more children need and deserve our help.

Florida in the past decade has deliberately moved toward an educational system that offers flexibility and choice, both in early childhood education through the VPK program, and as children grow, through our public education system and the McKay scholarship program. Our challenge and your charge is to examine how to best meet the needs of children with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities that involve behavioral health disciplines and educational programs, and how these programs might best be funded.

A final report of the committee findings and recommendations shall be submitted no later than April 15, 2008. It is my intent that legislation would be taken up in Chairman Bean's Health Care Council as soon as possible. I realize this is a tight timeline, but you have my full confidence that a sound work product can be produced promptly.

Thank you for your service to the Florida House of Representatives and the people of Florida

Sincerely,

Marco Rubio
Speaker